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Research on the Chinese College English Teaching Mode Inspired By Broaden-and Build Theory

LIU Jiexiu^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Petroleum University, Daqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore a new Chinese College English teaching mode inspired by broaden-and build theory of positive emotions in China. The research in the paper is carried mainly by quantitative approach with a complementary qualitative one. And it selected two hundred sophomores randomly for investigation by ways of interviewing and questionnaire. By comparing two groups with a distinct English-learning effect, it concludes that positive emotions such as interest, pride, satisfaction are conducive to a more accurate response, active thought and a further learning objective, which ultimately lead to a good learning behavior. However, negative emotions have the opposite effect. Afterwards, based on the research results a new College English teaching mode is built with the exploration of combining the teaching skills, learning methods and positive emotions, which will enhance the teaching efficiency.

Key words: Broaden and build theory of positive emotions; Positive emotions; Acquisition; Mode

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INTRODUCTION

In order to cultivate more college students with excellent English performance, researchers and teachers in China have been devoting themselves to find ways of improving

the teaching efficiency on class. In addition to researches on cognitive approaches in second language acquisition, they also pay attention to investigating the influence of learners' emotion. As the distinguished psychologist Jean Piaget points out: "No behavioral pattern is not affected by emotion and motivation" (Ormrod, 2012, p.76). Hence, it is important to detect the influence of emotion on language learning.

The broaden-and build theory of positive emotions is one of the significant and influential research findings of positive psychology. And it is developed by Barbara Fredrickson in University of Michigan starting around 1998. According to the theory,

"Certain discrete positive emotions—including joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love—although phenomenological distinct, all share the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources" (2001, p.218).

The present study is designed to investigate how the positive emotions, such as interest, contentment, joy, happiness and negative emotion, such as frustration, stress, disappointment, influence the second language acquisition of college students on class in China. This study aims to propose a new teaching method for Chinese college teachers, which will enhance the teaching efficiency, with the full consideration of learners' psychological factors that have been neglected in the past. This developmental study is designed to shed new light on the present research findings.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

From the current literature that the author has searched from CNKI in China, most researchers in the field of higher education apply the positive psychology to the relevant research on mental health of students. Some

representative researches are as follows: *Inspiration of Positive Psychology to Ideological Education of College Students* (2012) and *Research on the Mental Health Education of College Students Based on Positive Psychology* (2008). Some other papers start to discuss the effect of positive psychology on foreign language teaching, for example: *The Relationship between the Self-determination and the Teaching Behavior in Foreign Language Class of China* (2009). However, it is still at the initial stage that how teachers could enhance their teaching efficiency based on the broaden-and-build theory in positive psychology. Only one related article can be found from CNKI: *Role of Positive Emotions: The Broaden-and-build Theory* (2010), in which the research is undertaken under the enlightenment of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. The investigation in the paper aims to detect the function of positive emotion in second language acquisition and put forward a new teaching mode for English teachers in China, which will improve their teaching efficiency.

1.1 Participants

Two hundred sophomores are chosen randomly according to their oral English scores in the TEM 4 from the university where the author works. The participants come from ten departments, such as Petroleum Engineering, Resources Exploration Engineering, and Machinery Design, Manufacturing and Automation etc. Two-hundred questionnaires are distributed and resumed, among which one hundred and ninety one copies are valid. The questionnaires are ranked according to the score in TEM 4, choosing the top 30% and low 30%, with fifty seven participants in each group. The top 30% is labeled as Group 1 and low 30% as Group 2. In Group 1, there are 39 female students, who make up 68%, while there are 19 female students, who make up 33%.

Table 1
Descriptive Analyses

	Groups	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P</i>
An1 I am deeply interested in learning English	1.00	1.8197	.65136	.067
	2.00	4.1361	.48734	
An 2 I like learning English because I admire my English teacher.	1.00	1.8945	.51376	.236
	2.00	4.0267	.76034	
An 3 I am proud of my achievement in English.	1.00	1.0135	.48621	.390
	2.00	4.0631	.41366	
An 4 I am satisfied with my English learning methods.	1.00	2.1946	.90278	.079
	2.00	3.1762	.71138	
An 5 I am never nervous about questions that teachers ask me on class.	1.00	1.0216	.51263	.043
	2.00	3.0861	.56873	
An 6 I think it easy to learn English well.	1.00	1.9183	.56387	.471
	2.00	3.8765	.69267	
An7 I have not experienced frustration for learning English so far.	1.00	1.6892	.78135	.035
	2.00	4.0281	.56288	
An 8 I do not think learning English is a kind of pressure in college life.	1.00	1.6725	.64181	.171
	2.00	3.9681	.62816	

1.2 Research Design

The study is carried out by way of document analysis, interview and questionnaire. Firstly, questionnaire is designed based on the Positive and Negative Affect Scale by Watson (1988) and further revised according to the actual situation of foreign language teaching in China. At the beginning of the investigation, 10 students are invited to have the interview, which is based on the content of the questionnaire so as to test its rationality. Then the investigator makes the necessary modifications after the interviews. The content of the questionnaire includes: interest, the relationship between admiration to English teachers and learning motivation, whether being proud of the achievement from learning English, whether being satisfied with the learning methods, whether feeling nervous when asked to answer questions on class; whether regarding English learning as a difficult task; whether having experiences of frustration in the past English learning; whether considering English learning as pressure of college life. The first four questions of the questionnaire are based on positive emotions and the latter four on negative emotions. The questionnaire is scored according to Likert Scale and each item is assigned value from low to high. The respondent would choose a number from 1 to 5 using the criteria below: 1, strongly agree; 2, somewhat agree; 3, no opinion; 4, somewhat disagree; 5, strongly disagree.

1.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The collected data from the survey are analyzed with SPSS 11.0 software to determine the average value (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) of autonomous learning. Then a t-test is used to analyze the samples. The collected data are used for the quantitative analysis and the results are shown in Table 1.

The results of T test show that the statistical data are valid because the *SDs* of the two groups are close. According to the value of *P*, there are significant differences between two groups in terms of interest, satisfaction and failure experience. Among them, interest, as the basic motivation, is closely related to the effect of English learning for Chinese college students. The more interest they have, the more efficient the learners become. As the implementer of teaching activity, teachers have great influence on learners' emotion, with *M* of 1.8945 and 4.0267 in Group 1 and 2 respectively. The *M* value of Group 1 from An 1 and An 2 are similar, which proves admiration to teachers has almost the same effect as interest on language acquisition. As for satisfaction for their learning methods, there is no distinct difference between the two groups. Yet, the two groups of respondents have distinctly different psychological feelings in respect of their achievement in English learning.

In terms of negative emotions, the *P* values of nervousness and frustration are .043, .035. Both of them are less than .05, which shows there are great differences on these two aspects between two groups. Nervousness is usually due to lack of confidence in the English class. And nervousness represses the momentary actions of individuals, limits their thoughts to some extent so that they could not show their potentials fully. Moreover, the *P* values of An 6 and An 8 are 0.471 and 0.171, both of which are more than .05, and show that there are no obvious differences on these two variables. As a matter of fact, being afraid of difficulties and pressure are both typical negative emotions, which would influence the development of individual behavior and hinder the creativity of one's mind.

2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TEACHING MODE

Based on the above investigation and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, the paper puts forward a new mode of college English teaching.

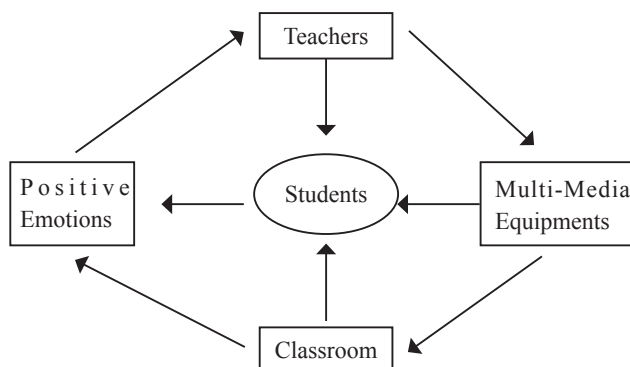


Figure 1
Schematic Diagram of A New Mode of College English Teaching

The mode is based on student-centered teaching mode. And its peculiar feature is the interference of positive emotions in it. In student-centered classrooms, both teachers and multimedia equipments are served for students. Yet the "traditional research focuses more on relevant research on teachers and their teaching methods" (Huang, 2009, p.69). And it pays little attention to the moods of learners. As a matter of fact, the moods of learners influence the learning efficiency a lot, for "learning is the process of learners' active inner construction in mental representation" (Chang, 2005, p.179). Therefore, learners should play the role of positive emotions correctly and be away from the influence of negative emotions. Teachers should make use of their teaching methods to cultivate learners' interest in learning and stimulate learners' motivation in learning. Meanwhile, teachers had better be in a good mood, for the instructors' emotion would influence the learners greatly. Teachers also had better create relax learning climate, which made the learners feel no pressure in learning. And they should try their best to make their teaching lively and interesting so that learners are attracted to the class because of interesting teaching contents instead of submission to authority of class as in traditional classroom. They should establish a harmonious relationship with learners, which help the learners accept the instructors and their teaching methods. More importantly, teachers should be aware of the differences among the learners. Based on different individual levels, teachers should eliminate the interference of learners' negative emotions in advance. For example, they can be clear about the learners' perplexity and obstacles when studying English by way of interview and questionnaire. Teachers should also help the learners to correct the negative emotion or turn the negative emotion to a positive one. In short, teachers should give full play to students' activity, sense of pride and satisfaction in the FLL classroom so as to help learners to be away from the negative emotions, such as frustration, failure experience and pressure. Based on individual differences in English learning, such a teaching mode inspired by positive emotions means to maximize every learner's potential, which will improve the learner's learning efficiency finally.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the research is inspired by the "broaden-and-build" theory of positive emotions, which shed new light on the second language teaching in China from the learners' psychological factors. It aims to improve the teaching efficiency by way of stimulating the initiative, detect individual capacity and construct learning objectives for the long term. Meanwhile, teachers should be fully aware of the significance of positive emotions in teaching, conducting new teaching mode on the basis

of traditional mode centering on students. However, the research has some limitations. For example, its subjects are chosen according to their marks in College English Test Band Four, which most college students are required to take part in before their graduation in China. Such a way of selecting subjects is somewhat biased. In addition, the questionnaire is distributed randomly, so the testers may not cover the best and worst learning effect students.

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